



County of Fairfax, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 13, 2006

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: James P. Zook, Director, Department of Planning and Zoning (DPZ)

SUBJECT: December 5, 2005 Board Matter re: Transit Oriented Development (TOD)

On December 5, 2005, the Board of Supervisors, at the request of Supervisors Kauffman and Smyth, directed staff to provide a more refined, standardized definition or set of principles for Transit Oriented Development for Fairfax County, as referenced in the attached Board Summary (Attachment 1).

Background

Transit Oriented Development or "TOD" is more often understood as a set of guiding principles rather than one universally agreed-upon definition. TOD generally refers to the concept of concentrating development intensity within a defined distance from a transit station. The defined distance from the transit station reflects the areas from which most people can comfortably walk to the station and are therefore more likely to use transit. This walking distance may vary due to topography and the presence of physical barriers to station access. Outside of this optimal walking area most TOD principles suggest a tapering down of intensity as distance increases from the station. In 2001, a study performed by LDR International, entitled Best Practices for Transit Oriented Development, indicated that "higher development intensities should be located adjacent to the transit station while lower intensities are located between a quarter mile and a half mile from the transit station. This transition of intensity helps mitigate the impact of the highest intensity uses on areas outside of the transit station area." Other key planning principles often applied to the development in these areas address such things as pedestrian connectivity, control of parking, provision of a balanced mix of uses, and high quality urban design and pedestrian amenities.

The results of staff's preliminary research on this topic are summarized in Attachment 2 and represent just some of the materials published by organizations such as the American Planning Association, the Urban Land Institute, and the Brookings Institution on the topic of Transit Oriented Development. We have also included a few other materials that provide additional insight and a starting point for further research on this topic.

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Proposed Process

Staff concurs with the Board that a definition and set of guiding principles for Transit Oriented Development is needed and suggests that the most appropriate mechanism for establishing this guidance for Fairfax County would be in the context of an amendment to the Policy Plan volume of the Comprehensive Plan. To ultimately define a set of principles for TOD in the context of the Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan, the following general process is recommended. Department of Planning and Zoning (DPZ) staff would request that the Planning Commission establish a special committee to take the lead in coordinating and soliciting input from various stakeholders (community representatives and experts) to help staff develop proposed Policy Plan guidance regarding Transit Oriented Development in Fairfax County. In addition, the Planning Commission will be asked to conduct at least one community outreach workshop (or more if deemed necessary) to assist staff in the development of the proposed amendment to the Policy Plan.

We envision that this process will not only include a discussion of established TOD principles but also include discussions as to how identified principles might best be applied to Fairfax County. For example, often TOD is referenced with regard to development surrounding a rail station in an urban setting, but increasingly the concept is being applied to stations in more suburban settings and to other transit modes such as bus rapid transit, light rail and commuter rail. The principles that are ultimately identified for Fairfax County will need to recognize common elements as well as the unique circumstances surrounding existing and future rail stations. TOD principles for the County also may need to address other identified transit areas and modes in the County.

DPZ staff will provide assistance in this process and will take the lead in preparing any proposed Policy Plan amendments. These proposed amendments would be brought back to the Board with a request to authorize public hearings before the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors.

This process is similar to that followed in 2000 to draft Policy Plan language addressing stream protection and defining “low impact development.” For this Plan amendment, the Planning Commission’s Environment Committee worked with various stakeholders and staff to review current Policy Plan text and to make recommendations to the Planning Commission and Board.

Unless otherwise directed by the Board, staff will request Planning Commission assistance as outlined above and initiate the process of developing a definition and/or set of principles for Transit Oriented Development in Fairfax County that can be considered for incorporation into the Policy Plan volume of the Comprehensive Plan. The proposed amendments developed through this process will be brought back to the Board for authorization to advertise public hearings.

CC: Board of Supervisors
Planning Commission
Anthony H. Griffin, County Executive
Robert A. Stalzer, Deputy County Executive
Katherine Ichter, Director, Department of Transportation

**CLERK'S BOARD SUMMARY-REPORT OF ACTIONS OF THE FAIRFAX COUNTY
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

MONDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2005

“56. TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT (TOD) (1:22 p.m.)

Jointly with Supervisor Smyth, Supervisor Kauffman said TOD is a term that is being used more frequently in the County, and for many years to come, as Metrorail service is extended to Wiehle and on to Dulles Airport. A working-level definition of TOD has been created through ongoing staff and community work on the Metrowest project in Providence District and a number of other large projects under construction or review in other parts of the County.

However, Supervisor Kauffman said that this concept has not been taken from a working-level definition to something easily understood or quickly translatable to the average citizen. He said that TOD must be understandable and, to the extent possible, standardized and verifiable. Cumulative impacts of such projects near individual transit stations and along service corridors must also be taken into account.

Jointly with Supervisor Smyth, Supervisor Kauffman moved that the Board direct staff to provide a more refined, standardized definition or set of principles of what it takes to be a TOD in the County. These principles should provide the flexibility to deal with unique circumstances surrounding each station area. He suggested that staff could include this as a part of the ongoing Transportation Plan Review or some other means to move toward an answer soon, while allowing for public comment and refinement. Supervisor Hyland seconded the motion.

Following discussion regarding Reston guidelines, the question was called on the motion, which carried by a vote of nine, Supervisor Frey being out of the room.”

Siegman, Patrick. "Is It Really TOD?"[Online] Available <http://www.planning.org/planning/member/2003may/todside2.htm>, February 17, 2006. (American Planning Association)

May 2003

What's the difference between a true transit-oriented development, which will deliver promised social and economic benefits, and a transit-adjacent development? A true TOD will include most of the following:

- The transit-oriented development lies within a five-minute walk of the transit stop, or about a quarter-mile from stop to edge. For major stations offering access to frequent high-speed service this catchment area may be extended to the measure of a 10-minute walk.
- A balanced mix of uses generates 24-hour ridership. There are places to work, to live, to learn, to relax and to shop for daily needs.
- A place-based zoning code generates buildings that shape and define memorable streets, squares, and plazas, while allowing uses to change easily over time.
- The average block perimeter is limited to no more than 1,350 feet. This generates a fine-grained network of streets, dispersing traffic and allowing for the creation of quiet and intimate thoroughfares.
- Minimum parking requirements are abolished.
- Maximum parking requirements are instituted: For every 1,000 workers, no more than 500 spaces and as few as 10 spaces are provided.
- Parking costs are "unbundled," and full market rates are charged for all parking spaces. The exception may be validated parking for shoppers.
- Major stops provide BikeStations, offering free attended bicycle parking, repairs, and rentals. At minor stops, secure and fully enclosed bicycle parking is provided.
- Transit service is fast, frequent, reliable, and comfortable, with a headway of 15 minutes or less.
- Roadway space is allocated and traffic signals timed primarily for the convenience of walkers and cyclists.
- Automobile level-of-service standards are met through congestion pricing measures, or disregarded entirely.
- Traffic is calmed, with roads designed to limit speed to 30 mph on major streets and 20 mph on lesser streets.

Patrick Siegman is a principal associate with Nelson\Nygaard in San Francisco.

Dunphy, Robert T., et al. *Developing Around Transit: Strategies and Solutions That Work*. Washington, D.C.: ULI-the Urban Land Institute, 2004.

Ten Principles for Successful Development around Transit

1. Make it better with a vision-Transit is a tool to help achieve a community vision, helping to create the kind of place in which people want to live, work, and play. A vision should be oriented toward the future but based on reality, stakeholder centered, collaborative and educational, focused on implementation, and flexible.
2. Apply the power of partnerships-To encourage and support private development around a planned or existing transit line, transit agencies and local governments may take a more active role by entering into partnerships with the development community. These partnerships must be carefully crafted to benefit each of the partners.
3. Think development when thinking about transit-Real estate opportunities should take priority over low-cost transit solutions to create opportunities for higher densities and a mix of housing types to market to a broad spectrum of incomes. New transit projects should be aggressive about density; good design and a high level of amenities are vital.
4. Get the parking right-Parking is a big factor in determining the layout of the station area. Four principal techniques for reducing the impact of parking are to *move it* (placing parking a 5-7 minute walk from the station opens prime real estate for development), *share it* (among patrons who use it at different times of day), *deck it* (structure parking), or *wrap it* (wrap the parking structure with retail, restaurants and residences).
5. Build a place, not a project-A new transit station represents an opportunity not only for development at the station, but for the development of a full-fledged transit-centered place, with all the attendant economic and cultural benefits.
6. Make retail development market-driven, not transit-driven-The most important considerations for retail development are location, market and design; in most markets, proximity to transit is not a prime consideration. Transit access can strengthen the retail market, but the market must be viable without the transit component. Retail follows rooftops and cannot be expected to drive development around transit.
7. Mix uses, but not necessarily in the same place-The creation of an attractive, vibrant community does not require that uses be mixed on the same site, or even at the same station. A transit corridor can successfully integrate a number of activity nodes devoted to different land uses, particularly when they are close together, easily accessible, and mutually supportive.
8. Make buses a great idea-*Buses carry the most transit passengers in all major regional markets except Atlanta, Boston, New York, and Washington.* Buses should offer regular, reliable and convenient service. Developers typically fail to think of bus stops as potential hubs for development.
9. Encourage every price point to live around transit-Just as people from every part of the economic spectrum ride transit, people from every part of the economic spectrum like to live

near transit. It is important for developers and their market consultants to know the demographic profiles of people who are seeking to live close to transit.

10. Engage corporate attention-Major employers can play an influential role in stimulating development around transit.

Belzer, Dena and Gerald Autler. *Transit Oriented Development: Moving From Rhetoric to Reality*. A Discussion Paper Prepared for The Brookings Institution Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy and The Great American Station Foundation, 2002.

Definitions of TOD often focus on built form, such as density, diversity and design, which can result in projects that may be designed well but do not function well.

Six performance criteria are identified to evaluate project function and outcomes.

1. Location Efficiency-In addition to proximity to transit, net residential density, transit frequency and quality, access to community amenities and a quality pedestrian environment are key variables that determine the location efficiency of a neighborhood.
2. Value Recapture-Overall, residents of denser, more transit-rich metropolitan areas pay less for transportation than their counterparts in auto-dependent metropolitan regions, even when the cost of public investments in transit is included in the calculation.
3. Livability-Livability and quality of life are increasingly viewed as closely connected to economic development. Can TOD improve the quality of life when measured by improved air quality and gasoline consumption, increased mobility choices, decreased congestion/commute burden, improved access to retail, services, recreational and cultural opportunities, public spaces, parks and plazas, better health and public safety, and better economic health.
4. Financial Return-TOD projects should be evaluated in terms of the total return to the public as well as private sectors.
5. Choice-Expanding rather than circumscribing options. Choice may entail a diversity of housing types, a greater range of affordable housing options, a diversity of retail types, and a balance of transportation choices.
6. Efficient Regional Land Use Patterns-TOD can foster more efficient land use patterns and cut down on traffic generation. Outcomes of an efficient regional land use pattern include less loss of farmland and open space, more suitable regional and subregional balance between jobs and housing, shorter commutes, less traffic and air pollution, station areas that can serve as destinations as well as origins.

HNTB TOD Principles Presented to Tysons Land Use Task Force

- **Complementary Mix of Uses**
 - Providing housing and street-level retail are important components to serve the neighborhood and work force population
 - **Compact Development**
 - Locate highest level of intensity closest to Metro stations
 - **Integrated Pedestrian System with Streetscape Amenities**
 - Provide efficient, comfortable and safe walking environment and circulation for all modes of transportation
 - Provide pedestrian visibility and connectivity
 - Increase transit use
 - Include plazas, courts, pocket parks and other community spaces
 - **Street-Oriented Building Forms**
 - Limit parking in front of buildings and encourage on-street parking
 - **Grid of Streets**
 - Serve pedestrians, bicycles, buses and cars
 - **Parking**
 - Encourage shared parking facilities, while minimizing surface parking lots
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Renne, John L. and Jan S. Wells. “Transit-Oriented Development: Developing a Strategy to Measure Success” in National Cooperative Highway Research Program, Research Results Digest 294. February 2005.

“TOD has recently become a popular tool to promote smart growth. As shown in the recently published *TCRP Report 102: Transit-Oriented Development in the United States: Experiences, Challenges, and Prospects* (Cervero et al., 2004), there are many and somewhat varying definitions of TOD. One definition, which has been adopted by the State of California, does a good job of capturing the essence of TOD: Moderate to higher density development, located within an easy walk [approximately 1/2 mile] of a major transit stop, generally with a mix of residential, employment and shopping opportunities designed for pedestrians without excluding the auto. TOD can be new construction or redevelopment of one or more buildings whose design and orientation facilitate transit use. (California Department of Transportation, 2002, 3)”

Coalition for Smarter Growth. “There is a solution: Transit Oriented Development”
[Online] Available <http://www.smartergrowth.net/issues/landuse/tod/solutions.htm>,
February 17, 2006.

“Transit Oriented Development (TOD) is a solution to the sprawling development that so often dominates a growing metropolitan region. TOD improves the physical, economic, and social aspects of a community.

- Development that includes a mixture of uses (residential, commercial, office, etc) ensures the economic success of the station and surrounding area.
- The concentration of housing, jobs, shops, and public spaces around transit stations builds community and makes it easier for people to use transit or to walk. Providing a variety of transportation alternatives reduces the need drive, improves air quality, and increases community interaction.
- TOD is a form of neighborhood revitalization and has the potential to stimulate economic growth in blighted areas and to provide housing and services to residents with a range of incomes.

Benefits of Transit Oriented Development:

Environmental

- TOD utilizes existing infrastructure so new resources do not need to be used.
- Locating offices and shops near transit stations gives people alternative options to driving. Alternative modes of transportation such as walking, biking, or transit reduces traffic congestion and air pollution.
- Transit-oriented development projects preserve open space by concentrating development in existing areas.

Economic

- Households spend less on transportation when there are a variety of low-cost alternatives.
- Property located near transit stations have higher property values.
- Vibrant communities that include pedestrians increase customers for area businesses.
- Town centers, both in urban and suburban areas, can be revitalized through transit-oriented development.

Social

- There is a higher quality of life for existing communities.
- As more people use transit and choose to walk and bike to their destinations, there are less car accidents and injuries.
- Those who are unable to drive--the elderly and the young--still have access to shops, restaurants and public spaces when there are multiple transportation options.
- An increase in walking and biking leads to healthier lifestyles and reduced stress levels.”